If I Show You the Roses Will You Follow?

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If I Show You the Roses Will You Follow?

by Ghostwriter98

Summary

A Bachelor AU where of course Hannibal would be most interested in the contestant who claims he’s straight, resists his charms and is unspeakably rude.

NOTE: In this fic the bachelor is bisexual and the show brings an array of both male and female contestants to choose from.

Notes

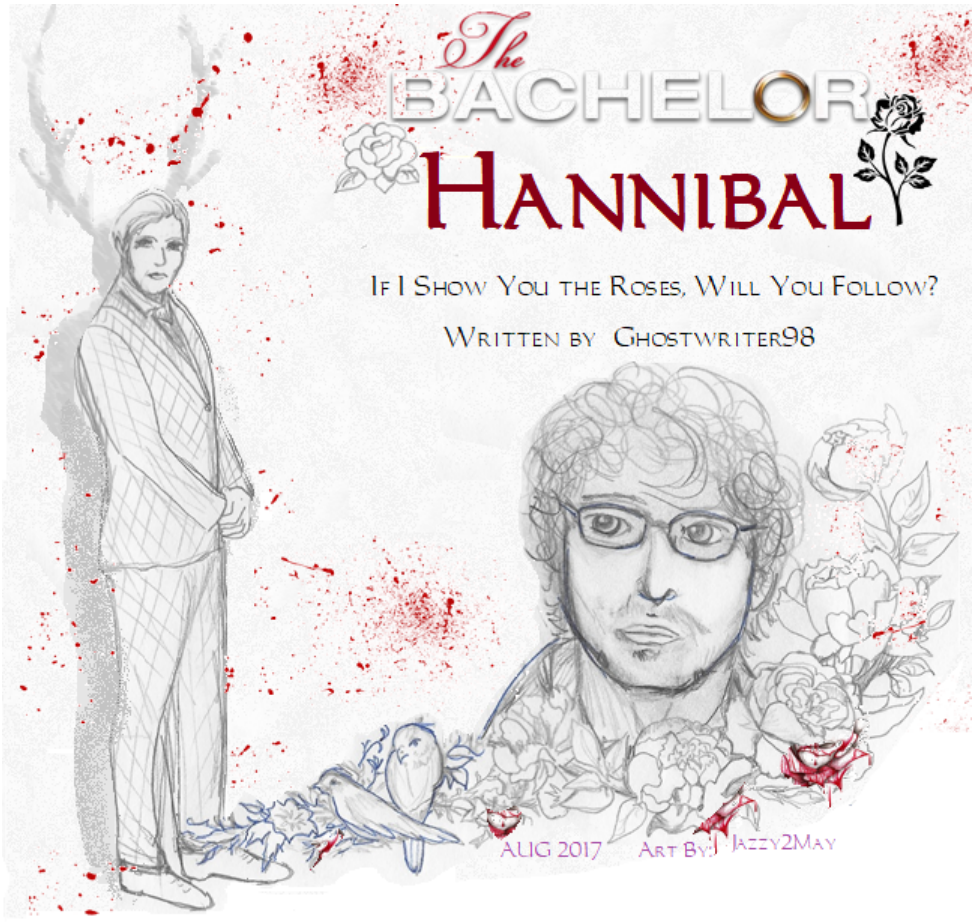
For those of you who don't know, The Bachelor is, according to Urban Dictionary:
"A reality show on ABC that puts 25 desperate and lonely Bachelorettes in competition with each other over a lonely, desperate Bachelor they don’t even know in the hopes that he will propose at the end of the season. Each week the Bachelorettes are given some time to be alone with the Bachelor in the hopes he will be more likely to choose them. At the end of each episode, the Bachelor gives a rose to the girls he wants to continue to the next round."

This chapter is a little background about why Will has joined the show.

A Deal is Made

Chapter Notes

> Title of this fic is from the song "Where the Wild Roses grow" and the amazing cover art below is by Jazzy2May. There's a link attached to the rest of the art if you want to check it out.



Founded by Edward Verger in 1871, Baltimore Bank has remained one of the most prestigious family owned banks in all of America. Mason Verger has no idea why it's so popular. His family have never been particularly kind to any of their clients. Speaking of clients, Mason should probably be listening to what this pathetic drunk is saying.

“Please, Mr. Verger,” Bill Graham begs, mint covering the alcohol that still stinks his breath.

“You're bankrupt,” Mason states simply. “I have no intention in wasting my money, giving loans to a man who’ll only drink away every dollar and never pay me back.”

Bill starts getting fidgety and desperate. “Please, I need it. Will’s barely getting by himself. He can’t afford to help his old man out of another sticky situation.”

“That's not my problem.” Mason ducks his head to hide his growing smile. The desperate and begging always give him a kick. However, it’s not good for the bank's business if everyone sees how sadistic he is.

“Please, I can’t buy any food and the bars on my back about my tab.” Bill is on his knees at this point, voice hopelessly miserable. “I haven’t eaten in days.”

“I wish I could be more helpful,” Mason drawls and it’s a *huge* lie, really. But it’s one of those phrases people expect him to say in order to appear human so he does it, albeit grudgingly.

“I’d do anything,” Bill implores pitifully. “*Anything* at all.”

Mason pauses, finger hovering over the security button. *This is when things start to get interesting.* Mason finds that when people are doomed, there is no limit to the lengths they will go to in order to survive. The bank owner thinks of the little experiment he conducted recently. How he put two dogs who were initially friends from a pet store into the same cage with an abundance of water and no food. How eventually the Bulldog cracked and ate the Labrador. It was quite a surprising outcome, the small dog eating the larger competitor. He guesses some creatures have cannibalism in them and others just don’t. He wonders what Bill Graham is willing to sacrifice for money. Respect? *Too easy*. Dignity? *Does he have any?* His relationship with his son? *Bingo!*

“I’m listening.” Mason’s finger retreats from the button.

Bill sighs with open relief. “You name it, I’ll do it.”

Mason thinks of Will Graham as he spins around on his office chair. He remembers the antisocial and neurotic kid from his early school days before he was transferred to a more prestigious private school in England. He rather enjoyed beating him up behind the playground, something Bill Graham obviously was not aware of. He knew the man lived alone up in the middle of Wolf Trap. He was apparently as much of a recluse now as he was during his school days, only surlier and more bitter. Mason hums in thought as he taps a pen to his lips, looking around his office for inspiration. His eyes fall on the poster on his left wall advertising how Baltimore Bank sponsors *The Bachelor*. Mason stops, dropping his pen as a light bulb goes off. Cameras, people, a lack of personal space and Will Graham, the world's most skittish loner. He had hit the jackpot!

Mason leans forward, face suddenly emotionless and professional. “I’ll lend you three thousand dollars which should be more than enough to cover your tab and food for the next couple of days.”

Bill feels like a weight has just been lifted off his shoulders. He waits patiently for Mason’s end of the deal. He’s sure it will be something along the lines of he attends Alcohols Anonymous and Bill will really try and go twice with good intentions before giving up as the call of alcohol leaves him parched and thirsty.

“In exchange for the money though your son has to sign up for this season of *The Bachelor,*” Mason announces and Bill Graham blinks because he thinks he’s misheard him. That he must be hallucinating again. He really shouldn’t have drunk so much this early in the morning.

“I’m sorry, can you repeat that?” Bill cocks one ear in the bank owner’s direction and listens really hard this time. Mason smiles, understanding the man’s plight and gestures silently to the poster on his wall.

“Oh,” Bill is speechless, “the problem with that is Will’s straight and this season has a bachelor. Believe me, I want him to find his significant other as soon as possible too. Times ticking, you know? Can’t he join next season's *The Bachelorette* instead?”

Mason internally smirks. *Will is straight and this season's bachelor is bisexual. This is getting better and better.*

“Those are my conditions,” Mason replies. “Let me know by the end of today if you accept my offer.”

“End of the day?” Bill Graham frets. *It's going to take a while and a lot of groveling to convince Will.* “Can’t I have more time?”

“No.” Mason frowns. “I’m being generous enough as it is by lending money to a hopeless case. Don’t you agree, Mr. Graham?”

“Yes, of course,” Bill apologizes profusely. “I'm terribly sorry. I’ll let you know as soon as possible.”

The man then charges determinedly out of Mason’s office. The bank owner grins smugly to himself. *He really loves his job.*

Fountain Meeting

Chapter Notes

> Will Graham will be dissing a lot of "The Bachelor" in this fic. Will's opinions are not my own. I've personally watched the show and think it's alright so I'm not trying to make fun of it. However, in order to make Will's personality in this really moody and sulky, I have to make him insult a lot of things.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will Graham stares at the email that congratulates his acceptance into *The Bachelor*. He scowls to himself as he scrolls down and notices a photo of the bachelor in question attached with a bit of background information. *Count Hannibal Lecter.* Will grimaces to himself. *Who even identifies themselves as a Count these days?* Apparently, he grew up in Lithuania and his parents are involved in the trading industry which makes them millionaires and their son, who is heir to the Lecter fortune, a millionaire by proxy. It also says Hannibal's occupation is in psychiatry. *Bloody hell.* Will positively loathes psychologists and psychiatrists. *Could this get any worse?* The empath rubs his eyes and lets out a long winded sigh. He scans further through the email to the list of other competitors, a variety of both female and male names. *So, he's bisexual.* Will's eyes bulge when he sees the dreaded name Mason Verger. Although, he's honestly not that surprised. This is exactly the kind of stunt he had expected the slimy bastard to pull.

During the days prior to his departure for California, Will is majorly depressed. Not even cuddling his dogs or his father's almost palpable relief and gratuitous praising could lighten his mood. Will leaves at six o'clock with a small suitcase filled with his worst shirts to board his plane on Wednesday. He feels nauseous and light headed the entire flight as his empathy is on overdrive in the small cabin area. Once he lands and gathers his suitcase, he allows himself to be ushered into a limousine filled with four other contestants. He blocks out their excited chatterings as they drive to Agoura Hills.

When they finally arrive, Will stumbles out and takes a breath of fresh perfume-free air. His eyes fall on the elegant mansion before him with open scrutiny. The building is just as pretentious as the show. He's forced into a makeup room against his will and powdered until he's coughing so hard that he has tears in his eyes. Will is then shoved in front of a camera with a microphone rudely invading his personal space. The empath is tired and cranky. He has been on a long four hour plane ride, a three hour car drive and has been yanked around against his will for the past *two fucking hours.* So when they ask him to give a little summary about who he is and his past lovers, he tells them the truth:

"I'm Will Graham. I'm thirty years old and I really don't want to be here. I have never been in love or in a healthy romantic relationship. Love is just a concoction of Oxytocin,

Serotonin, Testosterone and Dopamine. It's a biological cocktail I have no interest in drinking."

The cameramen look at each other with wide eyes.

"Erm, next," Leonardo, a middle aged man with a moustache, awkwardly says.

Will smiles. *The audience will hate him, the other contestants will hate him, fancy ass Hannibal Lecter will hate him and he will finally be able to go home*.

After all the contestants have been interviewed, they are given two hours to go to their designated rooms to change into formal wear. Will purposely stays, remaining in his crumpled pants and plaid shirt. When the contestants have returned, more than half of them giving Will disrespectful sniggers, they are fitted with small microphones by the crew and then reenter the limo to be driven to the front of the mansion for theatrics. While in the car, they are called out individually to be introduced to the bachelor. Will sits far away from the other competitors and glares at Mason's gelled hair with open hatred. The bank owner sits at the door closest to Hannibal, looking very smug and sure of himself. When his name is called he walks forward with a confident gait. The longer Will sits in this confined space, the stronger his fury grows. When his name is finally called out, the empath barely hears it over the blood rushing in his own ears.

He follows the path before him to a nice little fountain with water that gushes so loudly, it only worsens his growing headache. There Hannibal fucking Lecter stands in all his glory. Clad in a blue suit with a matching waist coat and a patterned tie, Will can see the appeal in this rich and well put together man. That only makes him *more* pissed off. Will stomps towards the bachelor and stands before him.

He dodges when Hannibal reaches out for his hand elegantly.

"I'm not gay or bisexual and even if I hypothetically was," Will makes a show of looking Hannibal up and down, "I wouldn't be interested."

The bachelor's mouth curls into a small, amused smile. He always did enjoy a challenge.

"Hannibal Lecter as I am sure you are already aware." He introduces with a small nod of his head, eyes shining with mirth. "It's an absolute pleasure to make your acquaintance."

"I'm afraid I can't say the same," Will spits out as he spins on his heel and stalks off. The cameramen trade worried glances and beg for Hannibal's forgiveness.

"There's no need to apologize." Hannibal says, gaze trailing after the retreating man. "What is that contestant's name?"

"Will Graham," the main cameraman answers nervously. "If he's offended you we can send him home and delete all the footage."

"No," Hannibal retorts sharply. "I don't desire that at all. Will Graham is by far the most intriguing contestant I have met tonight."

The crew all exchange confused looks but the bachelor doesn't notice, too intent on committing the little exchange to memory.

Chapter End Notes

Will and Hannibal will become better acquainted next chapter (much to the empath's annoyance)

The First Impression Rose

Chapter Notes

> Hey guys. I know it has been a long time and I'm really sorry about that. I had no idea it would take this long to finish off my other works but I've completed them and now I'm ready to focus on this fic. This means a lot more frequent updates. Thanks so much for waiting patiently! Hope you like the chapter.

Will Graham sits with the other contestants who are all gushing about how refined Hannibal Lecter is.

“Now that’s what I call a man.” Anthony Dimmond, a young male with a sly smirk, goads.

“I agree,” Mason drawls. “What a handsome specimen.”

“He's very polite.” A woman in a tight turquoise dress adds to the discussion. Her name is Alana. Will knows this because he has made a conscious effort to remember it. The empath finds her irresistibly attractive with her big blue eyes and curly brown hair. “He kissed my hand like a real gentleman.”

“I-I think he’s perfect.” Will hears faintly from his right. He turns to face the awkward man, glad that he's safely perched on the furthest edge of the couch. The nervous wreck in question extends a sweaty palm. “I’m Franklyn Froideveaux.”

“Will.” The man grimaces as he shakes the saturated limb.

“Isn’t he amazing?” Franklyn continues dreamily. “We would be the perfect couple. He eats cheese, you see, and I love cheese. We have so much in common!”

“Right...”

Will tries to inch further away but ends up precariously balancing on the arm of the sofa. He flails unsteadily, feeling himself lose balance until strong hands grip his shoulders and effortlessly push him upright.

“Easy, now,” a soft accented voice whispers in his ear.

Cheers and whistles echo around the room as the bachelor’s presence is recognized. Hannibal only has eyes for Will though, staring down at the surly man with great interest.

“I’m fine!” Will protests loudly. “I don’t need your help!”

“Of course not,” Hannibal agrees much to Will’s surprise. “You're an independent, strong man who does not require any kind of assistance.”

Will nods with relief. Hannibal understands that the empath does not need nor want his romantic attentions. “Exactly.”

“But you must admit, it would be freeing to allow yourself to be taken care of for a change instead of always doing the taking caring.” The bachelor leaves him with those cryptic words. Will suddenly feels vulnerable as the man voices his entire life in one measly sentence. How Will’s father is an alcoholic, constantly drinking away the money he earns and turning to his son for financial aid. The countless nights Will has spent helping him stumble to bed or fetching him a glass of water while he’s bent over a toilet, puking his guts out.

Will watches as Hannibal takes a seat and addresses the rest of the contestants courteously. He wonders if he’s scrutinized and picked them apart just as entirely as he has dissected Will. He sure hopes so because then Mason would be out on his ass by the end of the week.

He's broken out of his musings when the couch shifts and expensive cologne assaults his nose.

“Will Graham.” Mason grins wolfishly. “What a pleasant surprise!”

“Cut the bullshit. This was your plan all along.”

“I must admit, I debated as to whether joining the show to witness your pain was worth losing time at the bank. I rather enjoy breaking people’s hearts with high interest rates but when I saw who the bachelor was for this season.” Mason pauses and fans himself with his hand. “I just couldn’t *resist.* The Lecters have a fortune that rivals my own. Imagine, if the Lecters and Vergers joined forces in marriage. I’d sleep in a bed made of pure gold!”

“You’re a selfish prick and I hope you choke in your sleep,” Will snarls.

“You wouldn’t be the only one,” Mason agrees, eyeing Hannibal like a child in a candy store. “Now, if you’ll excuse me. I have a fish to catch.”

The host, a serious faced Jack Crawford, enters the room and everyone falls silent when they notice The First Impression Rose in his hand. Will can practically see Mason salivate at the sight. He can also *see* the Verger’s money hungry hand clasped high on Hannibal’s thigh. Will really wishes he could *unsee* that.

“The First Impression Rose,” Jack announces with a flourish. Will hides his snicker behind his hand. He thinks it's unnoticed until the man glares at him.

"Take as long as you need to choose the *right* one,” the host emphasizes, still pointedly staring at Will as he exits. The empath curls in on himself as the other contestants swing their heads in his direction and whisper conspiratorially. Hannibal doesn't pause to think as he reaches for the flower. He stands up abruptly, cradling the petals delicately in his hands before he moves to stand before Will.

He then kneels at the empath's feet as he offers his gift. “Do you accept this rose?”

He finds Will’s absolutely horrified facial expression quite humorous. The other contestants all swoon at the gesture, turning jealous eyes to the lucky and undeserving man.

Will leans towards the cameraman on his right who appears just at shocked at the bachelor's choice.

“I can say no, right?” he whispers to Leonardo, gesturing at Hannibal with animated hand gestures. He hesitantly shakes his head.

“Why not?!”

The cameraman shrugs. “It’s never been done before.”

The empath lets out a groan of annoyance and snatches the rose roughly from Hannibal’s hand. The thorns tear at the man’s skin and little droplets of blood start to well up along his injured fingers.

Will has the nerve to look regretful. “I-I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to do that.”

All his remorse ebbs away, however, when Hannibal pops a finger into his mouth and sucks the blood off. The other contestants all let out wolf whistles while Will’s mouth drops open at the sight in horror. Hannibal doesn’t break eye contact with Will throughout the encounter, making the man even more uncomfortable. He shoves at the bachelor’s shoulders which sends him sprawling onto the floor. Will then scrambles to his feet, ignoring scandalized gasps as he runs far, far away from this nightmare.

The Photo Shoot

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will is stuck here until the next Rose Ceremony at least. By then, he hopes that Hannibal will have realized how unstable he is and he's most definitely not dating material. Ten contestants went home after the last elimination round, one of which was Franklyn. Hannibal had also tried to eliminate Mason but apparently being one of the highest contributors to the show gives you a sort of immunity. The sheer offense in the Verger's face when he had been initially rejected had made Will's day. A special effort went towards flaunting his own First Impression Rose any chance he got as a result. That's the only reason why it's currently resting on his bedside table in a small glass half filled with water.The only reason.

The man is broken out of his thoughts by the excited chattering of the other contestants in the common room. He winces at the loud volume and rubs his ears. Will supposes he should see what all the noise is about. At least, that's what the cameraman who's been trailing him tells him. He enters the room and feels immediately uneasy when he notices a card in Anthony Dimmond's hands.

"Your special day only comes around once or in this case, twice," the man reads aloud huskily, raising his eyebrows. "We're all getting hitched! Hmm, I didn't take Hannibal as the polygamous type. Not that I particularly mind...."

Will rolls his eyes. *Hell to the no. He's not marrying Hannibal, even if it's only in some sort of weird fake wedding ceremony.*

It's revealed later that the card along with a list of names is alluding to a group date and a small competition. Said date being that the contestants dress up in bridal gowns and groomsman suits to get photographed by a wedding photographer. The contestant with the most romantic chemistry with Hannibal wins more time with him. Of course, Will's name is on that bloody date list. He's honestly not that surprised. Hannibal has been trailing him around everywhere. He's the only person that the bachelor ever asks to speak with one on one. Every other contestant has to actively seek him out. Hannibal would never reject a request for his time or conversation from the others. No, that would be much too rude but Will always delights in the way that the man's eyes darken slightly when he's interrupted talking to Will. So no, Will is not surprised by the date summons, annoyed but certainly not surprised.

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Will groans into his palms while everyone else squeals and shakes hands with some famous wedding photographer that's been hired by countless nameless celebrities. The empath even notices Mason slyly ask the photographer for his business card for later. *Well, that's a little presumptuous. Looks like he's shaken off Hannibal's earlier rejection.*

Will desperately wishes that he was at home or being manipulated by the FBI to work on cases. Anything is better than this.

“Don't appear so glum, Will,” a familiar voice soothes playfully. “I'm sure you will make a very handsome groom.”

Will scowls.

“I’m taking no part in this.” The man gestures in the vague direction of the wedding set up. “No part.”

“You never know. You may immensely enjoy it. It might also be helpful to practice."

"For?"

"The future." Hannibal's eyes glitter and Will knows that it's *their* non-existent future that he's thinking about.

“Now you listen here, buddy,” he all but growls. “I'm not interested. How many times do I have to tell you that "we" are not going to happen? I mean-shit, Hannibal. There are so many other people around here that want you. Why are you so obsessed with me?"

The empath blinks suddenly and notices that Hannibal is no longer dressed in his earlier brown suit. He is instead wearing a formal black three piece suit. The dark blazer stretches across his shoulders and back, emphasizing the lean muscle concealed by the layers of clothing. A white shirt underneath his jacket is crisp and positively glowing. The entire outfit is paired with a black vest and maroon tie that perfectly matches Hannibal's eyes. *Jesus, where does this guy get his clothes from?* Will knows that this is most definitely not one of the clothing arrangements that the show leases out to the contestants. Oh no, this suit is much too fitted for that, tailed to compliment Hannibal’s body to the T. *He looks good.* Will doesn’t know why he thought that but now that he has he finds himself unable to stop thinking it. *Damn it!*

Will darts his eyes away and nervously licks his lips.

“I look forward to our photo session,” Hannibal purrs with a pleased air before sauntering off. Will knows then that Hannibal noticed his staring. *Oh God, now the man will never leave him alone.*

The empath looks around and notices that the rest of the group have disappeared. He hurries in their general direction and eventually bursts into the clothing room. It’s alive with excited voices and movement with half the contestants shifting through stacks of formal wear for the perfect outfit while the other half are being fawned over by the makeup crew. Will lets out a huff and stalks forward. He grabs the first suit that meets his eye and walks over to the temporary changing rooms to put it on. He then storms out, avoiding the grabby hands and outraged cries of the makeup artists.

He leans against the wall outside and waits. Gradually - *does it really take that long to get dolled up?* - everyone is ready. They are lead into the garden where a beautiful flower arch

has been set up with white flowers twined with large green leaves. It's a little bit too fairy-tale for Will. The man sits on the grass, uncaring of creases or green stains. He watches as the other contestants interact with Hannibal. They basically clamber over one another in futile attempts to gain his attention, each trying to outshine the other. *It's pitiful.*

Anthony Dimmond finally starts off the photo shoot by shoving his tongue down Hannibal's throat. Will's eyes widen at the sight of a very disgruntled Hannibal trying to detach himself from the surprisingly strong man. Then it's Mason's turn who poses like a model on the cover of Vogue. The empath wonders if he has any idea how ridiculous he looks with pouty lips and lowered sultry eyes. Countless other contestants pass by in a meaningless blur until Alana descends elegantly in a white, lace trimmed wedding dress. She is so very beautiful that Will's throat closes up. The woman smiles warmly at the camera and turns adoring eyes onto Hannibal, giving him a slow Eskimo kiss. Just watching them gives Will butterflies. *No, this is not the place to develop unrequited crushes! She's here for Hannibal, not him!*

Finally, it's Will's much dreaded turn. He is dragged up rather reluctantly by the show's staff. Hannibal takes it from there, reeling Will into his side with a hand around his waist.

The bachelor leans closer and whispers softly into his ear, "You look magnificent, Will. You have completely surpassed my expectations."

"Great," Will grouches sarcastically. Hannibal trails a cold nose up the side of his neck.

Will jumps and a small, uncontrollable smile twitches at the corner of his mouth.

"What are you doing?!" he hisses lowly.

"I'm being affectionate with my newly wedded husband," Hannibal murmurs, warm breath caressing Will's neck.

"I'm not your fucking spouse!" Will breaks off into a giggle and freezes. "Cut that out!"

"Are you ticklish, Will?"

"*No.*"

Hannibal hums disbelievingly and tilts his head just so, causing his fringe to fall forward. The strands gently brush and run along Will's neck. The man bites his lip, trying to muffle the laughter that is building up his throat. A strangled chuckle escapes. Hannibal grins at the sound.

"In that case, you won't mind if I do this." Hannibal digs his fingers into Will's side. The man throws his head back and releases a loud, deep laugh. The bachelor is mesmerized by the sound and the soft plane of Will's neck that is now available to him. The two are broken out of their moment by rapid applause.

"Beautiful. Absolutely superb!" The photographer claps loudly, pausing so he can shift through his photos. "I've never seen a couple more in love! You two by far have the most romantic chemistry. Will Graham, you have won the challenge!"

The empath stiffens in Hannibal's arms and turns a murderous glare onto the man. The bachelor looks the epitome of innocent. Will pushes him away and hurries back over to the group who are all looking at him with envy. He grits his teeth angrily and ignores them. If he could give them the win, he would.

Will wishes he could stay hidden behind the other contestants but he's quickly gestured towards a car with the words "Just Married" written on the back. *Can this get any more embarrassing?* He is then reluctantly coerced to perform for more wedding photos. The fact that these are going to be released online makes him want to cry. He wonders if his students from the FBI will see them. *Oh God.*

"Come on, where's that smile?" the photographer teases while a very grumpy Will Graham is frowning into the lens of his camera.

"It doesn't exist. It was a lie."

The photographer looks startled at that response. There's a couple more moments of silence before he finds the nerve to try again. "What about a kiss?"

Will explodes, "Excuse me?!"

The photographer jumps, meekly elaborating, "A kiss with the bachelor?"

"I've known him for barely a week!" Will roars, all his rage pinned to the unsuspecting man before him. "I don't kiss strangers!"

It's only after he's spoken that he realizes his answer wasn't the vehement "no" it should have been but rather a "I haven't known him long enough yet." Will hisses under his breath and pulls himself out of the open top car. He then storms off in search for his room, desperate to escape the other contestants around him. Thankfully, he's left early enough that he's unable to claim his prize. *If spending more time with Hannibal even constitutes a prize*.

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Will thinks his day can't get any worse until he hears a soft knock on his door. It's a strange occurrence as most people avoid his room like the plague. Will hesitantly opens the door, peering left and right and seeing no one. He lets out a sigh of relief and is about to go back inside when something catches his eye. *Oh no. Oh no no no no.* Will glowers down at this feet where a blood red rose casually rests. The empath knows what this. Somehow, for reasons Will can't even begin to fathom, he has made the best impression on Hannibal on yet another occasion. This is immunity from another Rose Ceremony and it leaves Will guttered. He should throw the flower out of the window, stomp it under his booted feet - *hell,* he should try to flush it down the toilet. Instead, the empath cautiously picks up the rose and carefully brings it over to his bedside table. He places it into his little glass to join the other and just stares at it. He stares and stares, wondering why he can't bring himself to destroy it, contemplating what his life has come too.

If anyone asks (namely Hannibal), he'll say that he threw the rose in the bin.

Chapter End Notes

Will Graham secretly hoarding roses. What could it mean?

Meddling Mothers

Chapter Notes

> So I changed the title of the story. Not sure if I can do that when I've already posted four chapters (five now) but oh well. The new title is from the song "Where the Wild Roses Grow" which is a great song about a romance with a murderer (hehe, see what I did there). Anyway, this chapter is in Hannibal's perspective for a change. I thought it would be good to shed some light on what's going on from his end, you know explain some of the creepiness and obsession with Will. Italics = flashback. Hope you guys like it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The bachelor watches Will from where he has secretly concealed himself in a nearby alcove. The man delicately picks up the rose Hannibal has left for him and gives a skeptical glance around to make sure no one is watching before allowing himself to gently touch the petals. Hannibal suppresses a small smile at the action, knowing deep down that he is entirely too fond of Will. He also can't bring himself to care. If anyone told him a month ago that he would appear on a reality television show and subject himself to a group of men and women falsely fawning over him under the pretense of love, he would have promptly attempted to diagnose the person with insanity. Of course, it hadn't been an easy decision to come here. A decision that his mother had certainly forced his hand in…..

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Hannibal knocked softly on the painfully familiar door. It was promptly opened by a poised and refined elder woman. She held her chin up high and her maroon eyes instantly brightened at the sight of him.

"Hannibal, it's been so long!" Simonetta urged him inside quickly. She wanted to embrace him but not in the company of the street. "How I've missed you!"

"Hello, mother." Hannibal extended his hand in greeting.

"Please, Hannibal." She pulled him in for a hug. "None of this formality."

They gravitated towards the sitting room. His mother had brewed some tea and offered him a fine porcelain cup. Hannibal accepted, eyeing the intricate golden detail with a critical eye. He wondered why his parents had invited him over so urgently. Was there a sick relative? Was Lady Murasaki or Uncle Robert ill?

"We heard about Bedelia. We're deeply sorry for your loss," Count Lecter offered his sympathies as he strolled into the room. He stood ram rod straight and proud, posture just like his sons. That's where the similarities between them ended though for where Count

Lecter's demeanor was truly warm and inviting, Hannibal was merely formal and pleasant to hide his cold and calculating disposition.

His mother shook her head to herself. "Just tragic to have disappeared like that without a trace."

Hannibal suppressed a smile. "Indeed."

"Four years, Hannibal," she moaned forlornly, hand thrown over her face dramatically. "Four years of waiting for you to propose to her and then this happens. It's such a shame!"

"Bedelia and I were not suitable for marriage," Hannibal instantly disagreed. "Our differences were far too vast to overcome."

Simonetta ignored his words, choosing instead to keep muttering to herself, "Such a beautiful woman. Ambitious and well-mannered too. The children would have been gorgeous! Just picturing a little girl with your cheekbones and Bedelia's blue eyes makes my heart ache!"

"Dominic." She turned towards her husband, eyes filled with sorrow. "Why is life so unfair?"

Hannibal wondered if his mother would still believe Bedelia was perfect for him if she knew that she had been unfaithful. For that, Hannibal could forgive. Riffling throughout his patient's records and journals, on the other hand, he could not. She had wanted so desperately to see what was underneath his person suit and she had succeeded by evoking his anger after betraying his trust. He hoped Bedelia thought knowing him was worth her life.

"Oh, Hannibal!" his mother wailed, reaching forward to grip his hands in hers. "I just want you to be happy. I know how lonely life can be for a single man of your age. All your friends already settled down with wives and husbands."

Hannibal couldn't really argue with that. It did become rather lonesome when you were constantly wearing a mask and not even your lovers or closest friends could see who you really were. Forlorn and frustrated hardly covered the deep ache for companionship that resided inside.

His mask slipped imperceptibly. A slight pause and the crinkle at the corner of his lips gave him away.

"You see!" Simonetta announced loudly, turning towards her husband with a victorious grin. "I told you he was lonely!"

"I'm fine, I-"

"I knew we did the right thing!" she interrupted triumphantly. Hannibal knew that look all too well. It made him wary.

"What did you do?"

Count Lecter flashed his son a sympathetic look. "I'm terribly sorry, Hannibal. She couldn't be stopped."

"What did you do?" he repeated, tone tenser this time.

"You're going to find the love of your life," his mother chattered on excitedly, unaware of the tension that now engulfed the room, "on this season of The Bachelor!"

Hannibal's mind went blank. He closed his eyes and breathed harshly through his nose. He's aware of the show, had seen it while switching through the television channels with a curled lip. Reality television was most definitely not his cup of tea. In fact, he found the entire concept of watching people interact so exaggeratedly and rudely for the camera distasteful.

His mother was still ranting on and on about The Bachelor while Hannibal was too busy trying to convince himself not to commit matricide.

"No. Absolutely not."

She looked crestfallen. "Hannibal?"

"I refuse to be a part of a ridiculous television program whose sole purpose is to entertain the dimwitted."

"It's too late. They've already sorted through the candidates of bachelors and decided on you. They've even started planning the advertisements. It would be rude to cancel now."

He stared at the teaspoon by his cup. Small, deceptively harmless. A spoon would be quite an interesting choice of murder weapon. Hannibal reigned in his self control and shifted through his options. He could not withdraw from the show for that would be impolite and yet the thought of appearing on reality television was nauseating. He pursed his lips. He could offer compensation in the form of money to the show's staff but then there was the matter of his meddling mother to deal with. He would have to make some sort of effort to appease her.

Hannibal blinked as the perfect idea came to mind. A compromise of sorts.

"One week. I will spend one week on the show and if none of the contestants interest me, I want to be immediately withdrawn." He waved her off when she opened her mouth to argue. "Don't treat me as a fool. I know you have the influence and the means, if you so desire, to come to an agreement over such matters with the producers."

His mother paused, internally running over the deal in her mind and weighing up the pros and cons.

"And if you find someone of interest?" She raised an eyebrow in challenge, eyes sparkling.

"I will remain for the show's duration and, if all goes well, take a fiancé or fiancée."

Simonetta clapped excitedly at the thought of her only remaining child finally getting engaged. "It's a deal!"

“Don't celebrate just yet,” he warned her. “I am not easy to impress.”

His mother glanced up at him, challenge in her eyes as a phone seemingly appeared in her right hand out of thin air.

“You will find your significant other. I don’t care how fussy you are. You’re not going to be alone, not anymore.”

She then excused herself and began the long and grueling process of helping the crew shortlist the candidates for the contestants of the show.

Hannibal wanted so desperately to believe that he could find himself a suitable partner on The Bachelor but it was difficult when a trail of broken hearts and bodies were all that remained of his past lovers.

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He startles out of his reminiscing when a crew member taps him on the shoulder. He brandishes Hannibal's mobile phone. The bachelor takes the device. He checks the caller ID and sure enough, it's his mother. Normally contestants on The Bachelor would have there phones and other devices confiscated so there sole concentration was on the show's events. Hannibal supposes that his frightening mother had a stern word with them. He quickly moves to his room before answering.

"Hello, Hannibal."

"I see you've been antagonizing the producers again, mother."

“It’s been over a week,” she tells him softly, holding her breath.

“It has,” Hannibal agrees.

“So?” she prompts impatiently.

“How have you been?”

“Hannibal, please,” she begs him. “The suspense is killing me.”

“Is it now?” Hannibal’s voice is alight with mirth at the particular phrasing.

“Did you find someone interesting yet?”

“Oh.” Hannibal pauses and turns to look at his most recent sketch that involves a face full of hard, angry lines. “I definitely found a man who is endlessly fascinating to me.”

“Is he the one?”

“I’m not currently sure,” he hums in contemplation. “It really depends.”

“Depends on what?”

“On whether he can see me and accept me for who I truly am. A strong marriage can't be founded on falsities and pretenses.”

“Someone who loves you unconditionally?” His mother swoons. “I never knew you were such a romantic, Hannibal!”

The bachelor grins, all sharp teeth. “A fact that I find difficult to deny. I desire his heart and will settle for nothing less.”

And really, it's the truth. He will have Will Graham's heart one way or another. It all depends on the man's reception to him on whether said heart will be eaten or kept in one whole beating piece.

Chapter End Notes

I realized I should probably explain some things. In this story, Hannibal's parents didn't die during the war though Hannibal's sister Mischa still did. They stayed in Lithuania a couple years longer but found the memories too painful and moved to America when Hannibal was older.

The Single Date

Chapter Notes

> This chapter was originally in two parts but because I took so long to update, I combined part 1 and part 2 of the single date. Hope you guys like it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal leaves Will mostly alone the next week. He hasn't been invited on any more group dates or any single dates at least. The empath likes to think that it's because the bachelor has finally grown tired of him but he knows it's more likely because the film crew are telling Hannibal to stop spending all his time on one contestant. He knows this because Hannibal spends every moment the cameramen are on break or preoccupied with catty fights between other contestants trying to pin down Will's whereabouts and coerce more personal information out of him.

As the days tick by, Will waits with bated breath and growing dread for the bachelor to make his next bold move. Just because he's expecting it, doesn't mean Will isn't furious when he walks into the common room and finds a date card addressed to him.

It says (in perfect cursive),

"Music will tell you more about a man than he ever will reveal."

Loud noise and a single date with an irritating man. Joy. Will's only consolation is that if he doesn't receive a rose then he's booted off the show.

***

Will meets Hannibal in dark jeans and a plaid shirt at noon as specified on his date card. Hannibal is waiting for him in, *surprise,* a three-piece suit. Today, it's a beige number with a black tie and a little red pocket square. *Honestly, how many suits does this guy own?*

"Will." Hannibal inclines his head in greeting and offers his arm. The empath determinedly ignores it and stalks ahead, much to the amusement of the other contestants. Hannibal has not commented on Will's choice of clothing so far which the man finds quite surprising as the card clearly stated: *dress formally*. Unless, of course, Hannibal put that there knowing full well that Will wouldn't listen to him and this was part of some silly little game. As the empath looks at the man's smug facial expression he knows that he's right. In trying to rebel, Will has fallen into the bachelor's carefully manufactured plans perfectly. Will frowns at the thought. He had underestimated his enemy. In his line of work that kind of mistake could lead to his death.

“How has your day been so far?” Hannibal implores as they pull out of the mansion in a bright red sports car. The empath’s mouth curls into a smile when he sees the way Hannibal eyes the monstrosity at his hands. *Not his choice of car, then.*

“Bad,” Will answers honestly. “I’m being abducted by a man with a strange obsession with fancy suits.”

“Is that so?” The bachelor’s mouth ticks with amusement. “How very taxing for you.”

“It is. He’s probably a closeted serial killer,” Will dryly jokes as he studies the scenery around them.

Hannibal pauses from turning the radio on, an almost imperceptible movement. He's thankful that the film crew are following in their own car and are too far back to hear this conversation.

“Why would you assume such a thing?”

“He’s too perfect,” Will explains, realizing with alarm that he's teasing good-naturedly. “All his actions, even a simple hand shake, are premeditated, planned, *precise*. He never loses control. In fact, he thrives on having it.” The empath cracks a grin and gestures to himself. “Hence his unwilling date.”

The bachelor has become completely silent. Will wonders if perhaps he's offended the man with his serial killer joke. *Good.* When the empath turns around to face Hannibal, however, his eyes are not filled with anger but a rather strange emotion. Will notes with panic that it’s complete adoration. *What the actual hell?*

“You are by far the most ill-mannered man I have ever met,” Hannibal says and his voice is so reverent that Will feels his heart skip a beat.

The empath laughs awkwardly. “Wow, thanks for the compliment. You sure know how to woo, *Dr. Lecter.”*

“I'm only just beginning to utilize my charms, dear Will.”

It’s only then that Will realizes something. He’s been subconsciously flirting this past couple of minutes. Not flirting by anyone else’s normal standards but flirting in the way that Will Graham does.

This has to stop right now, the empath reasons with himself. *The Bachelor, a show that is broadcasted to millions across America, is not the place to have a sexuality crisis.*

They board a private plane to Utah - *the budget to this show must be ridiculously high* - where Hannibal reveals they are having their date at the opera. *Just great. Noisy singers in fancy costumes, complete with a whole bunch of emotional people in one tightly confined space*. His empathy is going to love that.

A part of him regrets not heeding Hannibal's date card now because the thought of walking into the opera under dressed and having everyone's eyes on him makes him anxious. Luckily,

the bachelor had planned ahead and forced the film crew to bring the suit Will wore for the staged wedding photos. He gratefully changes into the attire but refuses to thank the man in question or think about Hannibal's response of *"You look magnificent, Will. You have completely surpassed my expectations"* the last time he wore it.

They eventually arrive and settle in to watch. The opera should have been boring. Will really *wishes* it was boring but he enjoys it immensely. If the tears in the bachelor's eyes are any indication, he also found it equally as riveting.

"Did you enjoy the performance?" Hannibal turns to him, face open for the first time since Will has met him. The empath wants to lie and tell him it was rubbish but that vulnerable look has stopped him in his tracks.

"It was beautiful," he murmurs. "The way the knight lost his tight grip on his morals and chivalry and descended into darkness because of his lover's attack was so powerful."

"I don't believe the attack was the sole reason for his transformation," Hannibal argues. *Transformation? Huh. What an interesting choice of words*. "I suspect there was always darkness within his heart, he just chose to ignore it and overcompensated by trying to maintain a strict regimen of justice in an otherwise uncaring world."

"That's a bold statement."

"It is but my opinion."

"Well," Will fakes a yawn and glances at his watch, "would you look at the time? 6 o'clock already! We must really be getting back."

The bachelor hides the smallest of smirks behind his hand. He knew that Will was finally beginning to feel the intense attraction between them, but in the nature of his usual stubborn self, is trying to actively ignore it.

"Not yet, Will," Hannibal chides softly. "We have not yet had dinner."

The empath's eyelid twitches.

"Oh, yes," he grits out. "How could I have forgotten?"

The bachelor leads Will out of the opera with a hand on his lower back that does not seem to stray, no matter how many times Will slaps it away.

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Hannibal drives him to a large park. Will is then ushered to a candlelit table covered in a white table cloth. There is a single pesky rose resting between the two place settings that are filled with food they are not allowed to eat. Show rules, *apparently* eating doesn't look attractive on air. The furniture is set up in the middle of a small clearing surrounded by large green trees. A view of the night sky is unobstructed above them, stars twinkling brightly as though they are winking. It's ridiculously romantic. Will wants to punch the show's staff for doing this to him.

The bachelor pulls out Will's chair like the gentleman he is. Will frowns at the action. Much to Hannibal's amusement, Will then proceeds to rush out of his chair and repeat the gesture for Hannibal with a defiant look on his face. *Oh yes, Will really is perfect.*

"Thank you," Hannibal graciously says as he sits down and elegantly crosses one leg over the other. Will stumbles back to his own seat and slouches down, trying to hide underneath the frames of his glasses.

"I'm sorry," he suddenly blurts out, much to his own surprise. He rubs his face with his hands and opens his mouth to continue. Will's eyes then fall on the cold camera lens to his left and he quickly shuts his mouth, lowering his head.

"Mr. Marinko," Hannibal calls out, not once breaking eye contact with Will, "please power down the cameras for a minute."

"But that's against the show's protocol!" Leonardo splutters. The other cameramen look at each other and shrug uncaringly. Truth be told, they were really dying for a break.

"Just for a moment," Hannibal assures. "Will has something important to say that he would rather was not heard by millions of people."

"I…"

"It was a temporary glitch. These things happen." Hannibal reaches into his pocket for his business card. "It is within my knowledge that your wife is suffering from post-natal depression. I'm quite a respected psychiatrist. I could offer my services freely if I so inclined?"

Leonardo seems torn for a couple of moments. He closes his eyes and sighs loudly as he fiddles with the camera. "You've got five minutes. Five! That's all."

"Of course." Hannibal smiles, he has the man wrapped around his finger now. "Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Marinko."

The empath stares open mouthed throughout the entire exchange.

The cameramen all walk off in search of a toilet and a place to eat, giving them privacy. Hannibal turns off his own hidden microphone and gestures that Will does the same. He follows the instruction numbly.

"That did not just happen," Will states in open disbelief. "You just *bribed* the cameraman."

"That I did." Hannibal looks at Will pointedly. "I hope it's worth being potentially disqualified from the show."

The empath takes his cue.

"I really am sorry." Will swallows thickly. "I know you came onto this show with good intentions and here I am ruining it with all my moping about. You're a good person really which is why I think you deserve to the know the truth about why I'm here before this weird

fascination you seem to have," Will gestures to himself with a self-deprecating laugh, "develops any further." His tone turns serious suddenly as he reaches forward and grabs desperately onto Hannibal's arm. "I'm not playing hard to get or trying some weird other tactic. I'm not lying when I say I was forced to be on here. Mason Verger, that blond prick who can't keep his hands off you, is the bank owner in Baltimore. My dad's going through a bit of a rough patch and, long story short, the only way that bastard would lend money to him was if I embarrassed myself on this stupid show."

Will lets out a relieved breath after he has finished. "I'm so glad I got that off my chest."

Hannibal blinks, taking his time to process the onslaught of new information. *Will was blackmailed to be here. Will might actually be telling the truth when he says that he is straight. Will isn't trying to win at all, he's trying his best to lose.* The bachelor is suddenly filled with an uncontrollable fury. It's Mason's fault that Hannibal has had his perfect life companion dangled under his nose, only to have him snatched away. If he loses Will he will hunt down Mason Verger and make him suffer for every bit of heart break he causes Hannibal. He will then hunt down Will and convince him to stay through whatever means necessary.

"Hannibal," Will is growing increasingly concerned the longer he stares at the blank look on the bachelor's face, "please say something."

"I should be the one apologizing. I have been pursuing you unrelentingly without comprehending your situation. You must have been most distressed."

"It's alright." Will is so close to going home now that he can almost taste freedom. "It wasn't all horrible. I had fun tonight."

"Me too," the bachelor admits softly. Hannibal's eyes fall to where Will's fingers still rest, probably without conscious thought, on his arm. He's overwhelmed suddenly. He can't let Will go. Even though he knows that's what Will wants. He's always been a selfish lover.

"So, that's that." Will smiles crookedly. "You don't give me the rose. I can go home and you can focus on finding the perfect girl," He pauses then tacks on hastily, "- or guy."

"I'm afraid that I'm unable to do that, Will."

"What?!" Will screeches, banging his hands onto the table angrily. "Why the hell not?!"

"I find myself quite interested in you romantically."

Will takes a deep calming breath. He repeats slowly, as though talking to an infant, "That's not going to work out for you because *I'm not into men."*

"Are you certain?"

"Excuse me?" Will retaliates hotly.

"Are you completely certain that you do not feel even the slightest attraction towards males?"

“I think I know my own sexuality,” the empath snarls sarcastically, arms crossed and body language openly hostile. “*Thank you* very much.”

“Then I shall strike a deal. Stay two more weeks. If you still remain uninterested, I will, quite reluctantly, let you go.”

“No.”

“Yes,” the bachelor states. He has no intention in telling the man that the rules state a contestant might leave anytime they wish. He doubts that would have been approved by Mason either. “Two more weeks in your company. That is all I desire. It’s not that difficult of a task.”

There is a tense silence that stretches between them.

“I don’t have a choice, do I?” Will grumbles.

“No, you do not.” Hannibal glances down at the table and notices the now empty spot between their place settings. The bachelor is surprised that he hadn’t noticed the theft earlier. He was probably too invested in Will’s sob story. *Clever boy.*

“Where is the rose, Will?”

The man darts his eyes away and hides behind his glasses. “I don’t know.”

“Will,” Hannibal says, firmer this time. “I will *not* ask again.”

The empath winces at the tone, shifting in his seat uncomfortably. The bachelor radiated a sort of power that made him feel inferior and weak, almost like prey.

“Will.”

Will hastily reaches under the table and fumbles with the rose in his lap. He throws it in Hannibal's direction, determinedly refusing to make eye contact with the bachelor.

“Thank you.” Hannibal smiles softly. Will just stares defiantly up at him, jaw tense and hands clenched. He's going to make the bachelor regret forcing him into this position. Mark his words.

Chapter End Notes

I just realized how many mini deals and agreements there are in this fic. Like what ever happened to free will and choice?

Original music quote is "My music will tell you more about me than I ever will" but I can't find the original author.

Numbing the Pain

Chapter Notes

> I want to thank you all for your support. You're all awesome! I'm sorry I haven't replied to any comments from last chapter (I usually do) but I've been a bit busy. I read all the comments though and they made me smile.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The other contestants all mill about Will when he enters the room, hungry for news. Will growls at them, still fuming that his plan of hiding the rose from Hannibal's view had been foiled. After all, one couldn't give a rose to a contestant when there wasn't a rose to give. No rose equals elimination and elimination equals home and peace. If only Hannibal hadn't been so damn annoying and persistent about him staying...

“I got the rose,” Will grudgingly admits with a tight grimace. He holds the flower gingerly in front of him.

“Cut! Cut!” Leonardo calls to his camera crew as he turns to face Will. “Can we try that again? This time with a little more excitement!”

The empath looks unimpressed with the request but nods.

“I got the rose.” Will tries for a small smile but the forced facial expression comes off creepy and frightening. Probably because he's internally imagining Hannibal Lecter’s death.

“I think we’ll just keep the original...”

Will grunts something and storms off to his temporary room. He throws himself onto his bed and screams out his frustration, voice muffled by the pillow he has buried his head in. He stiffens when he notices a red glowing light in the reflection of his window. Will spins around and throws the closest object at the unknown cameraman who followed him into his room and rudely opened the door.

“What the hell is wrong with you?!” Will hisses at the invader of his privacy. “I could have been naked!”

“Even better.” The man pats the top of his trusty device. “That would have boosted our views even more than a meltdown.”

“Get out!” Will screeches, jumping to his feet and slamming his door shut. He leans against the wood with a sigh and tries to even his breathing. *Hannibal fucking Lecter.* Will knew the man was trouble from the second he first saw him. Now he’s stuck here for another miserable two weeks. *Great*.

"Are you completely certain you do not feel even the slightest attraction towards males?"

The sheer nerve. *Just because he's handsome doesn't mean - Wait, wait. Hold up!* What the hell did he just think?

Will shakes his head. He must be confusing Hannibal's attraction with his own. He's become too deeply entangled into his mind thanks to his empathy. That excuse would have normally worked except for the fact that the empath hasn't been able to get into Hannibal's head. He's tried - oh believe him, he's tried - but Hannibal's mind and emotions are blank like a white canvas.

Will needs a distraction which is why he quite uncharacteristically leaves the comfort of his room in favour of chatting with the other contestants. After all, what else can he do when there's no internet and his laptop has been confiscated by the film crew? He finds them all outside on the patio. It appears that the contestants are having another cocktail party at 11 o'clock at night. Will stares dubiously at the alcohol that always appears well stocked and piled high. It is almost as if the producers want them constantly drunk and emotional. The empath rubs his facial growth. It would probably be idiotic to get wasted on television but Will's having a really bad day and alcohol has always been his best friend.

He hunkers down with the strongest stuff they have (his father taught him well) and time ticks by blissfully fast.

"Hey, your Will, right?"

"Yeah." Will nods in a daze. He has no idea how late it is or how much whiskey he's drunk. He turns and sees Alana Bloom. His heartbeat quickens at her close proximity and the smell of her fruity perfume.

"I haven't seen you around much." She smiles sympathetically. "Home sick?"

You have no idea. "I guess you could say that."

"It's not all bad," Alana soothes.

"A bunch of men and women fighting over some rich guy, some drunk while others completely out of their damn mind?" Will laughs humorlessly as he plays with his depressingly empty glass. "What could be worse?"

"A bunch of men and women fighting over a man that's not worth it. Hannibal is worth the fuss. He's the most perfect gentleman I've ever met." Alana's voice takes on a dreamy quality. "He's a professional psychiatrist and an heir to a billionaire trading industry. He's courteous, polite and well-mannered unlike the usual rich assholes. He cooks and paints as a hobby, not to mention he's attractive too."

Will cringes. "Exactly, he's *too perfect.* It's all a bloody façade. Why am I the only one who can see that he's hiding something?"

Alana frowns. "Are you drunk?"

“No,” Will reaches to pour himself another glass of whiskey, “but I’m getting there.”

“...maybe you should slow down.”

“Trust me, I *need* this.” Will accentuates his point by knocking back the drink. His thoughts slow down and his mind becomes foggy. *Finally*. He groans in satisfaction. “Oh, I feel so much better.”

“What happened to inspire this alcoholic frenzy?”

“Hannibal fucking Lecter,” the empath spits out hatefully.

The woman’s eyebrows arch with surprise. “Oh, that’s right! You got the single date. Rightfully so, might I add, after your cute photo shoot a while back.”

Will grinds his teeth together. “It was not *cute*. Hannibal tickled me so I would crack a smile.” His face turns grave as he recounts his trauma. “He uses dirty tactics.”

Alana turns away so Will won’t see her smile. The man is being plain ludicrous.

“So, how was the date?”

“Horrible.” Will shudders. “The man can’t keep his hands to himself!”

Alana nods in understanding and places a comforting hand on his shoulder. “Did he try to kiss you?”

“God no!” Will recoils in open horror, voice slurring. “If he tried I would have bitten his lip off!”

Alana stifles a giggle. “I can see why he likes you. You’re really feisty and you’ve got the whole playing hard to get card down pact.”

“I’m not playing hard to get,” Will laments desperately. “I’m playing stay the fuck away from me.”

“Of course you are,” Alana teases. “That’s why you’re on this show. To avoid the bachelor and get sent home.”

“If only...” Will wistfully replies. He blinks and stares at Alana.

“You’re so pretty. Hannibal’s a lucky guy,” he mumbles out loud before attempting to slap a hand over his mouth to silence himself. His coordination skills are quite lacking at this point so he ends up smacking his nose instead. “Ouch.”

Alana lets out a loud laugh. “You’re really funny, Will.”

“Yeah. I’m really fucking hilarious, way funnier than Hannibal who always walks around like he’s got a stick up his ass. Uptight prick.”

“Whoa.” Alana’s eyes are wide as she attempts to cover her hidden microphone. “Be careful what you say, Will."

She glances around and notices with relief that the camera crew are already occupied with other contestants.

“Screw that!” Will grunts as he staggers to his feet only to fall over. He groans on the ground and reaches around for his glasses that tumbled off his face. Alana's eyes dart around anxiously, unsure of what to do. She spots Hannibal and sighs with relief. He's returned from his alone time with Mason. The contestant in question has scurried along ahead of him, looking pale and ashy.

“Hannibal!” Alana shouts and gestures at Will. The bachelor stares at her blankly and slowly walks over. When his eyes rest on the drunken mess at her feet, they widen ever so slightly with shock and his pace quickens significantly.

“What happened?” He bends down to take a closer look at Will. The stench of alcohol is strong enough to make Hannibal wrinkle his nose with disgust.

“Oh,” Will sneers. “It’s you.”

He tries to tactfully roll away but Hannibal is too fast, grabbing him by the arm and yanking him upright. The bachelor brushes off the leaves that have clung to Will’s clothing.

“See what I mean,” Will hiccups as he addresses Alana. “*Handssssy.”*

“That is quite enough, Will,” Hannibal reprimands, helping the man along with an arm around his waist. “What on earth were you thinking? You could seriously injure yourself in such an inebriated state.”

“I was thinking...” Will pauses for a moment, unable to remember the question just asked or his preplanned answer. He squints up at the man beside him and blurts out the first thing that comes to mind, “you have nice eyes.”

“I see,” Hannibal’s mouth twists into a small, self-satisfied smirk. “Is it safe to assume that intoxicated Will enjoys my company more than sober Will?”

“No, we both hate you equally. You and your stupid cheekbones. How’s it even possible for those to be so sharp. Did you get surgery or somethin’?”

“No, I did not. They're natural.”

“I’ll be the judge of that.” Will suspiciously raises one hand and tries to poke the bachelor’s cheek. He misses, of course, and ends up sticking the finger into Hannibal’s ear instead. The bachelor flinches.

“Stop that,” Hannibal scolds, batting away Will’s wondering fingers.

“Not so nice when the tables have turned, huh?” the empath goads and tries again. He trips over his own two feet and swears.

“Will? Are you alright?”

“Go back to being an asshole,” Will grouches, rubbing his eyes behind his glasses with his fingers. “Chivalrous gentleman doesn’t suit you.”

He stumbles over air again and grips onto Hannibal’s arm tightly. “Argh, everything’s spinning!”

Hannibal stops, squinting upward at the long distance to Will’s room. He quickly calculates how slow their current progress has been and makes a quick decision.

“Hold on, Will,” Hannibal warns, hooking an arm under the empath's knees and back and scooping him up.

“Wha?” Will becomes greatly disorientated as his world is flipped. He moans loudly into Hannibal's chest and squeezes his eyes shut. They snap back open a couple of moments later when his slow brain processes what just happened.

“Hey! Put me down!” Will protests hotly, struggling in the bachelor's grip. “I’m not some damsel in distress!”

Hannibal doesn't reply nor does he let Will go. He just stares down at Will with a stupid fond look on his face. The empath lets out a long string of curse words that impressively do not stop or dwindle in number for the remainder of their journey.

Chapter End Notes

> So, I looked it up and cheekbone implants are an actual thing. This chapter was also partly inspired by this meme but I don't know how to attach it. It's basically Bedelia visiting Will in prison and being like "he thinks you're playing hard to get" and Will being all sassy and replying "I'm not playing hard to get, I'm playing leave me the fuck alone."

Bleeding Hearts

Chapter Notes

Some background for the those of you who haven't seen The Bachelor:

The bachelor can request to spend one on one time with a contestant which basically means he pulls them away from the rest of the contestants for some privacy to talk. Likewise, contestants can request one on one time with the bachelor. One on one time is usually spent talking about personal stuff or kissing. One can reject an invitation for one on one time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will and Alana sit together on one of the outside sofas. They're engaged in fervent discussion about the pros and cons of being on the show. Will admittedly has more cons. Okay, he *only* has cons. It doesn't help that he had a day long hangover following his recent drunken episode and that he might still be a little irritated at the fact that no one stopped him from downing all that whisky. His foul mood might have also been caused by the other contestants nearby on the prowl for the bachelor who is taking certain people aside for some alone time to "talk." Will hasn't seen *The Bachelor* on T.V. but he's heard about what those private one on one sessions entail and sure talking is part of it but so is kissing. God help Hannibal if he ever tried something like that *on him*…

Will flinches as a gush of water wets his pant leg. He turns his glare towards Mason who's in the pool and making a ridiculous amount of noise.

"Sorry." Mason grins innocently, batting his eyelashes. "It was an accident."

Sure, Will thinks to himself sourly. Although, he would rather Mason stay in the pool and splash waves of water at him than leave the pool and flaunt those terribly small Speedos he's currently donned in. Anthony Dimmond walks by, seemingly also deciding to go for a dip in the pool, and slips into the water dressed in moderately better swimming trunks. Will says moderately because they're still short and tight as hell.

Will shudders and Alana thankfully distracts him by shifting the topic onto dogs. Now that's something that Will could talk about for hours. He finds himself relaxing around Alana as the minutes pass by. She's nice and their conversations are interesting. In fact, Will's surprised to find that Alana has recently started working at the FBI facility that he teaches at. He wonders how they've never met before. A part of him wishes they had. Maybe they could have had something together. Will knows it's hopeless now. Alana is completely smitten with Hannibal and really how could he compete with that man? Who in their right mind would pick the prickly criminal profiler over the suave, rich psychiatrist? Regardless, he enjoys her

company. He watches as a stray curl falls across her eyes and it's so endearing that he leans forward subconsciously, hand reaching forward to push the strand back.

He freezes when he hears a round of cheers, knowing full well what that means. He immediately withdraws his touch and frowns.

"Hello, Hannibal," Anthony Dimmond purrs, pulling himself half out of the water. The sun reflects off the glittering droplets on his chest in a way that the flirt probably hopes is irresistibly tantalizing. "Come on in, the waters fine."

Just when things couldn't get any worse, Mason dog paddles over. "Yeah, Hannibal. Come and join us."

Will's kind of surprised at the mellow tone Mason is using. If it were anyone else then Mason would have probably grabbed onto a limb and yanked them forcefully into the pool.

Will huffs and returns to conversation with Alana. Barely another minute passes before they're being disturbed.

"Hello Will, Alana," Hannibal greets them. "Terribly sorry to interrupt but may I talk to Will for a minute?"

Yeah sure, a minute. Will's pretty sure that girl (Clar something?) he just "talked to" was gone for a good fifteen minutes.

Will narrows his eyes and replies with a curt, "No."

"Please." On anyone else it would sound like they were begging. On Hannibal, however, it sounds like a perfectly reasonable request. Too bad Will's not reasonable.

"I'm busy. Ask me another time." Will dismisses him, turning back to Alana. Those stupid maroon eyes remain pinned to his face.

"It's all right. Go and have your one on one time." Alana smiles softly, speaking more to the bachelor than him. Will can practically see the hearts in her eyes.

"No, it's not all right. In fact," Will snaps, eyes flashing with glee as he tastes the next words on his tongue, "it's quite rude. We were in the middle of a very serious discussion."

Hannibal's mouth twitches. "Ah, yes. Who is this Winston you speak so highly of?"

Will's eyebrows raise when he senses a hint of something quite unexpected in Hannibal's usually emotionless tone. *Jealously? Looks like Hannibal is just as much of a slave to petty human emotions as the rest of us.*

"None of your business," Will snarks at the same time as Alana states, "his dog."

"I see." And the bachelor sounds so pleased that Will wants to kick a wall.

“Anyway, the answer is still no. I don't want to talk to you,” Will bites out, angling his body in a way that blocks Hannibal from his view. “So, if you could just leave, that would be great.”

“Will!” Alana gasps.

“What?”

“I’m so sorry, Hannibal,” Alana apologizes on his behalf. “Will’s a little cranky. I think he’s still a bit hungover.”

Will opens his mouth, about to protest that that’s impossible considering it’s been four days since the terrible incident they do not speak of but Hannibal beats him to it.

“It’s fine. Will is unable to help it. He has amassed himself with forts for self-preservation. If one wishes to climb over his barriers, they must be prepared for some resistance and backlash.”

Will stops breathing because is that what he just thinks it was? *Nuh huh. No way.*

“Did you just psychoanalyze me? Don’t psychoanalyze me!” Will all but roars, standing up so he can meet Hannibal’s gaze head on. “You won’t like me when I’m psychoanalyzed.”

“Whoa. Calm down,” Leonardo swiftly intervenes and Will blinks because *when did he get here?* Will glances around and sure enough, the entire film crew are around him. There’s even a fucking sound boom inches from his face. How had he not noticed that?

“Will,” Leonardo says with obvious aggravation. “This is the fifth time Hannibal has asked for one on one time with you and you’ve said no. As part of the show, you’re kind of expected to want to spend time with the bachelor. If you keep avoiding him what’s the purpose of you being on here?”

And gee, Will really likes the direction this conversation is heading in. Except, Mason had warned him a few days ago after hearing about the rose debacle, that the deal he had made with Will’s father was that Will would have to be a contestant on the show and could only leave if he was eliminated by Hannibal. He couldn’t sabotage himself and be thrown out by the staff and he couldn’t *not* accept a rose. He had to wait until Hannibal tired of him. It should have been easy with Will spiting fire at Hannibal and growling at him any chance he got. Strangely though, it seemed that the more Will struggled, the more fascinated Hannibal became. It was almost as though some sadistic part of him liked how Will fought him tooth and nail. Maybe he should just go with the flow? He might become more boring that way to Hannibal.

“Okay, fine.” Will sighs heavily and bids goodbye to Alana. He turns to Hannibal and throws his right arm in a random direction. “Let’s go and talk about some sappy shit.”

Hannibal frowns at that but otherwise doesn’t complain about the swearing. He must have realized getting Will alone was enough of an ask. Well, as alone as a man could get with another man while a gaggle of cameramen trail behind them.

They walk to a nice secluded spot with a white bench and a thriving garden. Hannibal picks him a Bleeding Heart and presents the pink flower to him. Will bites the inside of his cheek to stop himself from throwing it away and grimacing. *Remember, be boring like everyone else.*

He takes the flower, utters a very awkward "Um, thanks" and hurriedly sits down.

Hannibal takes a seat beside him, watching him intensely again. Will can't stand that creepy obsessive stare or the suffocating silence.

"Interesting choice of flower," Will notes, gesturing to the daisies, carnations and marigolds planted around them. "Could have picked something less…." *Romantic.* Will swallows down the word.

"I quite like the *Dicentra spectabilis.* It's a rather symbolic plant."

Symbolic, okay, not as bad as romantic.

"Right, because you used to be a surgeon. I take it you've seen a lot of bleeding hearts."

Hannibal pauses and gives him a curious look.

Will shrugs. "Other contestants talk. Keep in mind that whatever you say to them probably won't stay private."

"Hmm." A small, fond smile graces Hannibal's lips. "Except with you, Will. I believe you're quite good at keeping secrets."

Uh oh. Secret keeping is a good trait.

"Not really. I'm a terribly untrustworthy person. I talk about people behind their backs all the time. "

"I highly doubt that. You hold yourself like a man with a lot on his mind. As though you're constantly burdened by other people's worries and desires."

Will's mouth dries, surprised at how spot on Hannibal's perception of him is. He internally curses. Only he would be unlucky enough to catch the romantic eye of a psychiatrist.

"Er, right," he says instead because he sure as hell isn't going to go into his empathy. Who knows how much more interesting that would make him.

Will glances down at the Bleeding Heart in his hand and a sudden thought bounces around in his mind. There is some deeper meaning behind this flower. Something more than merely symbolic. Something that he just can't pinpoint. He frowns down at the soft, pink petals and shakes his head. He has more important things to worry about like making himself as unappealing to the overly perfect and respectable bachelor as possible.

As Will sits pondering in silence, a bird tweets above them. Hannibal glances upward and inconspicuously shifts out of its path, as though he's afraid a feather or dropping will fall and

destroy his expensive attire.

Will grins evilly.

“What was that you said earlier? You’d like to know more about Winston. He’s one of my favorites but don’t tell the others,” Will speaks conspicuously behind his hand. “They might get jealous.”

“Others?”

“Yep. Many, many others. Didn’t I mention I have seven dogs?”

“Seven dogs?” Hannibal faintly repeats.

“Oh yes, they’re like family to me. A big, wet noised, slobbering family. Maybe I could introduce them to you some day?”

The panicked look on Hannibal’s face has Will mentally cheering with delight. *Mission accomplished.*

Chapter End Notes

Hmm, Mason's acting strangely. I wonder why....

An Emotional Roller Coaster (Group Date: Part 1)

Chapter Notes

> Hey everyone! I've been reading your comments about having longer chapters and decided to do a double update this week.

Jack Crawford enters the room with his usual serious expression and procures a group date card. It’s the same face he used when he told a tearful Molly and a fuming Mathew to leave the premises last rose ceremony. Anthony Dimmond immediately snatches the card off of the host.

“Alana, Clarice, Mason, Will and myself,” Anthony reads the names of those invited.

Will is surprised that he's on the list. From the look of irritation on Jack’s grim face, Will can tell that he's not too impressed with Hannibal’s choice either. The empath inwardly curses. He thought for sure that Hannibal would have given up on him after learning about his obsession with dogs. After all, in the pitiful few relationships Will had been in his pets had almost always been the deal breaker. Mostly because he loved his dogs more than those he was dating and they could tell.

Will is broken out of his thoughts by a person purposely clearing their throat. His gaze snaps back to Anthony whose preening under all the attention he’s receiving at the front of the room. Surely he knows that the contestants are looking at the date card in his hands and not at him.

“The clue for the group date is,” Anthony continues before pausing for suspense, “love has its ups and downs.”

Will rolls his eyes at the obviousness of the answer. “It’s an amusement park.”

He's booed by the rest of the contestants for spoiling the surprise.

“What? You all knew it!” Will snaps defensively, hunching inwardly to protect himself from the torrent of glares.

“Did not!” Mason retaliates, poking out his tongue like the child that he is. Will wonders why Mason is even invited on the date in the first place but then he remembers how being rich and a sponsor of the show has its perks.

All of the contestants invited rush off to get themselves dolled up. Will stays wearing his baggy brown pants, the usual plaid shirt and a grey sweater over the top. He hopes Mason’s fancy ass suit and fur coat puts Hannibal off Will and his own simple style of fashion. He doubts it though.

They all pile into the hired car waiting at the front of the gate and Hannibal somehow ends up sitting beside Will. The bachelor is pressed up against his side for the entire agonizing three hour drive. It's very uncomfortable, especially with the way heat from Hannibal's stupid thigh burns into Will's leg. Will can't help but glare hatefully out of the window. If the small smirk on the bachelor's face is any indication, Will would say Hannibal knows of his struggles.

When they finally reach the amusement park, Will hurriedly throws the car door open and quickly stumbles out. His legs, not quite adjusted to walking after being unused for so long, collapse under him and he falls to the ground.

He curses and fumbles around for his glasses. Once he has them back on, he quickly smooths out his shirt. At this point, he's really just trying (and failing) to regain some small scrap of his dignity.

"Need some help?" a high pitched voice asks and Will smiles up at the sight of Alana who looks breathtaking in a pink and black patterned dress. The top dips just low enough to show a hint of cleavage.

Will nods his assent, too enraptured by the women above him to utter a word. She leans down, causing the front of her dress to gape and-

"Alana?" Hannibal says sharply, popping up out of literally nowhere into Will's field of vision. "What are you doing?"

Alana straightens immediately and turns around to face the bachelor. *Damn you, Hannibal!*

"Will fell over and I thought I'd give him a hand."

"I see." The bachelor's maroon eyes immediately seek Will out. "It appears that I was wrong in assuming last week that it was the alcohol that made you uncoordinated. It must just be your normal disposition to be mildly unbalanced."

"Oh, ha ha. You're so funny *Dr.* Lecter," Will sneers sarcastically.

Hannibal extends his hand. "Come, Will."

The empath ignores the offered limb and pulls himself to his feet. Still quite unsteady, he stumbles forward into the bachelor's chest. Will lets out a squawk of surprise as his hands fly up unconsciously to right himself. His palms press against hard muscle.

Not bad, his heart appreciatively whispers to which his mind responds with a, *shut up!*

Will quickly snatches his hands away as if he's been burned.

"Right then," Will awkwardly clears his throat. "Lead the way, oh mighty Bachelor."

Hannibal raises an eyebrow, offering his arm.

"You can't be serious?" Will shoves past Hannibal and makes his way towards the rest of the group. He glances back just once to see Alana take the incentive to swoop in and place her

own elbow in the space provided. Will shoves down the jealously rising in his throat. He's finally reunited with the rest of the contestants at the colourfully decorated entrance. Apparently, the amusement park is vacated for the day which leaves it completely and utterly deserted. *Good God. What a nightmare.* Now, Will can't "accidentally" get lost in the crowd and escape Hannibal.

"Where to first?"

"The roller coaster!" Mason cheers, jumping up and down. "I need something to get my adrenaline pumping!"

"Yes," Anthony agrees lowly. "I want to see the great Dr. Lecter shed that rigid composure and get all disheveled and *wild*."

Will shakes his head in disbelief. "Yeah, that's not going to happen, buddy. Very few things ruffle Hannibal's feathers. Even if he appears surprised it's probably just a manufactured expression."

Hannibal's ears prick up and he stares at this strange man who loathes him yet, at the same time, knows him better than anyone else ever has. Even his past lovers couldn't compare to the splendor that is Will.

"Hannibal? Hannibal, are you even listening to me?"

"Forgive me," Hannibal apologizes as he refocuses on the woman clinging onto his arm with distasteful desperation. "Please continue."

Alana repeats slower with the barest hint of irritation in her voice. "I'm a psychology professor and psychiatrist. We're based in the same field. Some would say we're quite compatible based on our shared interests."

"Hmm," Hannibal agrees absentmindedly, attention honing back onto the empath. "You and Will seem fairly well acquainted. Do you know what his occupation is?"

Alana's mouth gapes like a fish for a moment, her face slowly growing red with anger. "Isn't that something you should ask him?"

Hannibal's lips tilt upwards in a slight but very warm smile. "Will would never mention anything about his personal life to me. Too fearful of my background in psychiatry. He doesn't want me to pick apart his brain as I suspect many inadequate therapists have already attempted."

Alana sighs in a put-upon manner before reluctantly divulging, "He works at Quantico FBI academy where he teaches forensics to the trainees. Occasionally he consults on cases for the FBI."

"Interesting," Hannibal muses. The fact that Will is so entangled in the legal system should cause Hannibal to retreat. However, it only makes Will Graham that much more enticing to him.

“Now, back to us. How did your past relationships end?”

Murder.

“Infidelity, social pressures and trust issues. Now, I believe we should catch up with the group.”

The bachelor follows the loud cheers and squeals of the other contestants to a giant metal contraption. It’s an eight seater roller coaster with two seats each row. The entire monstrosity is painted a bright, tasteless green and has multiple flashing lights that are blinding in their intensity.

“Yoo hoo!” Mason calls out, patting the empty seat beside him. “Come join me, Hannibal!”

Anthony pouts. “No! Sit next to me! I’m much more fun!”

Hannibal suppresses a full body flinch as he remembers what happened the last time he was in close proximity with either of the handsy men.

Alana steps onto the platform and reaches back, giving him an encouraging smile. *Better but not by much.* The seat beside Clarice is vacant but that’s not who Hannibal is looking to sit next to.

“Are you not joining us?” Hannibal asks, glancing down at Will who is sitting on the ground beside the ride.

“Er no.” Will refuses to make eye contact with the bachelor and chooses instead to fiddle with his fingers.

“Why not?”

“I um,” Will breaks off, rubbing the back of his neck sheepishly. “I'm not really a fan of roller coasters.”

Hannibal bends down to Will’s eye level. Will vaguely wonders if Hannibal's aware that Mason and Anthony are blatantly checking out his ass.

“Don’t worry, I will support you throughout the trying experience.”

Will shrewdly studies the bachelor. “Yeah right. You just want an excuse to hold my hand.”

“Possibly.”

“Then I’m *definitely* not going on the ride.”

Hannibal relents. After all, he will have many more opportunities throughout the day to convince Will to partake in fair activities with him.

Hannibal sits besides Clarice and finds he quite enjoys her West Virginian accent, especially when she screams at the top of her lungs when they round the bends. He discreetly glances at

her from head to toe, taking in her glossy brown hair and bright blue eyes and finds he quite enjoys the rest of her as well. How strange that he had not noticed her beauty before this day. He must have been too blindsided by Will.

Hannibal closes his eyes and pictures a life with her. Coming home after a long day of helping his patients and slaughtering the rude. Clarice entering the room with oven mitts and a crooked smile before drawling something about burning dinner. Hannibal envisions himself kissing her and hiding his hands behind his back because there was the tiniest trace of blood still underneath his fingernails that she could never know about it. A part of the side of him that she could never begin to accept nor understand. Hannibal's mouth parts in a grimace before he can control it.

"Something wrong?" Clarice reaches for his hand and squeezes it in a sweet gesture of support.

Yes, Hannibal thinks. *You are not Will. You will never see me for who I really am.*

A Literal Roller Coaster (Group Date: Part 2)

Chapter Notes

> NOTE - In this fic, I've made it that Will actually needs his glasses to see. Mostly because it just fits into the plot better.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Your accent is quite distinct,” Hannibal notes as he helps Clarice off the ride at its conclusion. He wonders why he hasn’t brought it up in earlier discussions with her. Probably because it irks him when people make a big deal about his own.

“Yours too, *Dr*,” she retaliates sharply.

“Touché. West Virginian?”

“Yes. I’m a small town girl.”

“I grew up on the countryside of Lithuania,” Hannibal offers.

“I know." Clarice watches him with critical eyes. "Nothing small about living in the Lecter estate with all that forestry and woodland.”

“You’ve done your research,” Hannibal voices with approval.

Clarice doesn’t bathe in the compliment as many of the other contestants would have. Instead, she simply shrugs. “It’s important in my line of work.”

“Ah. Police force?”

“FBI trainee,” she confirms. Hannibal smirks at the ironic realization that yet another of his favourite contestants is involved heavily in the justice system.

Will watches Hannibal and Clarice exchange with a frown. The bachelor has been so focused on him for weeks and now he suddenly has a new fixation. Will finds it odd and strangely frustrating. Sure, he hasn't been particularly fond of Hannibal's attention in the past but he had it all the same. He grew to, kind of, get used to it. Without it now, Will feels a little hurt. It's like he’s an old barbie that's been tossed aside when a newer, prettier model had come along.

Will jumps from a hard slap on his back as Mason sidles up to him.

“Jealously doesn’t suit you.”

Will turns the full heat of his glare onto Mason. “Shut up! I’m not jealous.”

“Poor whittle Will, outshined by some young, pretty thing,” Mason goads.

Will growls in warning, "I said shut up!"

Mason snorts. “Come on, did you really think he’d go for damaged goods when he could have the full package? That’s just *pitiful*.”

Will feels lightheaded as all the frustration and irritation from the past couple weeks builds to a crescendo. Being powerless against Hannibal, his father’s expectations, Mason’s stupid deal, Jack Crawford’s obvious dislike for him and the whole thing with Alana comes together until it’s just too much. Will feels like he's drowning. In a last ditch effort for control, he spins around and throws a punch. Mason’s head snaps back at the contact and he lets out a laugh.

“Hit me again,” Mason taunts, gesturing to his pale face and bloody nose with a smirk. “I know you want to. Hit me again. I dare you.”

“No.”

“I wonder how your daddy is going. Probably drank away all that money I gave him,” Mason jeers. “Guess you're on here embarrassing yourself for nothing then. Do you think he's even noticed you're gone?”

“You little-” Will reels his fist back for another swing at that ugly, smug face but his arm is caught just in time.

“Will, that is quite enough,” Hannibal whispers lowly as he wraps himself around him. Will tries to break out of his hold but the bachelor keeps him pinned until he tires himself out with all his struggling.

“This behaviour is inexcusable. I’m very disappointed in you.”

Will stares at the ground, swallowing down his guilt. He feels terrible and actually regrets embarrassing Hannibal. What the hell is wrong with him?

“I’m sorry,” Will apologizes stiffly. “Now please let go of me.”

“Have you calmed down?”

“Yes,” Will lies. He feels coiled tight with rage but it’s not aimed at Mason.

“Are you sure?”

“Just go back to Clarice!” Will snarls with open hostility.

“Is that what this is about?” Hannibal says with relief because they are *finally getting somewhere*. “Are you envious that someone else is receiving my undivided attention?”

Will frowns because it's certainly not that. It's everything else that's happened to him and maybe a little bit about being ignored by Hannibal. But only a teeny, tiny bit.

"I see."

"You see nothing," Will hisses and juts his elbow into Hannibal's stomach. The bachelor's grip loosens momentarily, allowing Will to break free and run off. He eventually stops and hangs his head besides the Go Kart course. He calms down after a few deep breathes of fresh, people free air. Then the full realization of his actions crashes down on him. What has he done? Will was supposed to stay invisible, now he's the contestant that punched that guy on camera. His students are going to watch him on this ridiculous show and lose their respect for him. Even worse, Will knows he's going to be portrayed as the villain of the season. That contestant that all the viewers hate and sure it's not all that different to real life for Will but at least people that have met him have fair reasons for finding him prickly and difficult to deal with.

"They deleted the footage."

Will startles at the unexpected sound of Hannibal's voice.

"Christ!" he splutters, clutching at his heart. "You scared the shit out of me!"

"That can't be sanitary," Hannibal jokes. Will didn't even know that *he could* joke.

"How?"

"Leonardo owes me a favour."

Will runs his hands through his hair and lets out a sigh that's a mixture of relief and disapproval. "That's really cruel. Blackmailing a man who's desperate for psychiatric help for his wife."

"I never said I played fair."

"No," Will admits softly, protectively wrapping his arms around himself. "You didn't."

"I believe you are indebted to me now. Perhaps you could honestly answer a few questions as repayment?"

Will huffs. *Everything always has a price.* "Okay, shoot."

"Why are you so afraid of roller coasters?"

"I have to take off my glasses and I can't see clearly when there's going to be a sharp turn or a big drop." Will avoids Hannibal's eyes, hating the feeling of vulnerability that swamps over him. "I don't like that."

"People are frightened of the unknown. It is only logical that you are frightened of what you can't expect."

“Exactly.”

“Some would argue that falling in love is just as unpredictable and dangerous as an amusement park ride.” Hannibal’s voice is gentle, gaze intently scrutinizing Will’s every movement.

Will shrugs. “I guess so.”

“Are you afraid of love, Will?”

“I…” Will trails off, pausing to really think about it. “I think I might be.”

“Why is that?”

“I see my dad, what he became after my mum left him. A shadow of his previous self, an alcoholic just to numb the pain of separation.” Will swallows, clearing the lump that's gathered in his throat and stalling the reveal of one of his deepest fears. “I don’t want to lose myself like that.”

“Thank you for your honestly.” Hannibal rewards Will with a soft squeeze of his shoulder. The touch lingers a tad longer than socially acceptable. Will’s skin tingles even after Hannibal removes his hand.

“Guess we’re even now. Even Steven.”

Hannibal’s lips twist into a devious smirk. “Not quite.”

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“I hate you! I hate you so much right now!” Will screams as the carriage dips over a crest.

Hannibal laughs deeply at his reaction. “It’s alright, Will.”

“No, it isn’t!” Will blinks against his already blurry vision, fast winds and disorienting turns making sight just about impossible.

He jumps as a warm hand clasps over his knee. “Breathe Will. Everything is fine. The ride has been approved by safety officials.”

“I don’t care!” Will closes his eyes and prays that this hell will end soon. His knuckles are white where he tightly grips at the bars in front of him.

“Will, *Will.”* Hannibal’s voice sounds distorted and far away. Soft fingers brush back his curls and lightly graze down his face. “Focus on me, darling.”

Will’s eyes snap open at the grotesque endearment and even in his hazy vision he can tell that the blob that is Hannibal appears to be getting closer and closer and *closer*.

“Are you fucking kidding me!” Will swears loudly as he shoves the bachelor away. “You brought me on here just so you could kiss me, didn’t you?! You were planning on taking

advantage of my poor eyesight to make a move!”

Hannibal clears his throat. “That may have been on the agenda.”

“Unbelievable!” Will throws his hands up, promptly forgetting about his near-death experience. “You are unbelievable!”

Chapter End Notes

If you're wondering who got the rose on this group date, it was Clarice. Will is not a happy chappy about it. Also, we have fan art now thanks to Jazzy2May! I've put a link and also attached one of the art pieces to the first chapter if you want to see it.

Works inspired by this one

ART- If I Show You the Roses, Will You Follow? by jazzy2may

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!